

School District Information Packet about **Hmong Refugee Students**



Updated September 2, 2004

School District Information Packet about Hmong Refugee Students

Cover Photos: St Paul - Ramsey Co. Public Health, & M. Uraneck

Booklet available on-line:
Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction Web page:
www.dpi.state.wi.us

Paper copy available from:

Seree Weroha, Ph.D.
Brenda Noy Aphayrath
Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
PO Box 7841
Madison WI 53707-7841
Seree.Weroha@dpi.state.wi.us
(608) 266-7292, Office - Weroha
(608) 267-2443, Office- Aphayrath
(608) 266-1965, Fax

Updated: September 2, 2004
Booklet Compiled by Madeline Uraneck



WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION
ELIZABETH BURMASTER, STATE SUPERINTENDENT
MADISON, WISCONSIN

Wisconsin DPI Information Packet about New Hmong Students

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State of Wisconsin
Department of Public Instruction

Elizabeth Burmaster, State Superintendent

September 8, 2004

Dear Colleague:

This year, Wisconsin schools will welcome an estimated 1,500 children from Hmong refugee families into our state. A total of 15,000 individuals will move to established Hmong-American communities in four U.S. states, including Wisconsin.

Our schools have long been meeting places for people with different languages, traditions, and customs. In the two decades since the first Hmong refugees arrived, our state has been enriched by their culture. I salute the educators who have met many challenges, and who today, through their experience and caring, are better prepared to meet the needs of these new students.

I was enormously proud that DPI's Fulbright-Hayes Seminar to Thailand and Laos this summer included Asian-American educators who themselves had been raised in refugee camps and who, as small children, had fled across the Mekong River with their families. They returned to Southeast Asia as licensed teachers and administrators. Their success speaks volumes about the opportunities and the acceptance that is possible in our state and nation.

Our state is part of an increasingly interconnected world. Wisconsin's immigrant and refugee students come from more than 100 countries. As educators, we must understand and acknowledge the role their heritage plays in their personal history and the potential they bring to expand the horizons of our communities.

I ask all of you to give our new refugees and immigrants, not only from Thailand but from Africa, South America, Eastern Europe, and all parts of our world, a warm Wisconsin welcome. Like the educators who represented Wisconsin abroad this summer, our newest students have a wonderful opportunity to take advantage of our excellent educational system and contribute much to the future of our state.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Burmaster
State Superintendent
EB:mu

School Checklist

New Hmong Refugees 2004



1. Anticipate Numbers

Based on anticipated arrivals, inform school staff and school board on numbers of children and families expected in the community. Large numbers may necessitate staff additions, re-assignments, further planning, and budgeting.

A Minnesota delegation that visited the refugee settlement at Wat Tham Krabok in Thailand summarized their observations as follows, "Area school districts should prepare for new refugee students who have had minimal, and in many cases, no access to previous formal education. In addition to concerns that environmental and nutritional factors may have caused a higher than normal incidence of developmental delays, few will have had adequate preparation for the American classroom. While most children will adapt quickly, the initial months in school will require accommodations by the school district."

From American Paj Ntaub – Wat Tham Krabok Assessment Team Report Executive Summary, April 28, 2004. Full report at: <http://www.co.ramsey.mn.us>

Resource:

See attached Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development data, "Estimated Hmong Arrivals" by Ying Lee, E-mail: ying.lee@dwd.state.wi.us



2. Collaborate with Other Agencies

Many agencies in the state and in local communities are collaborating to make the best use of available resources, including health, W-2, employment, and elderly care. Learn about the agencies in your community and have a school representative join their meetings.

Resource:

See attached DWD handout, "Wisconsin Refugee Service Providers" by Ying Lee, E-mail: ying.lee@dwd.state.wi.us



3. Value Experience

Hmong-American adults who are already in the community are invaluable resources for advice and perspective for educators and for new arrivals. Refugee and Hmong-American children themselves have much to share.

Resource:

A fascinating book, *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down: A Hmong Child, Her American Doctors, and the Collision of Two Cultures*. Fadiman, Anne. New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Girous, 1997.



4. Welcome Visibly and Involve the Media

Make *all* new students feel welcome by posting their pictures, their work, their names, etc., in visible places in the school, and involving them in initial assemblies, after-school opportunities, etc. Help educate the public to dispel myths and stereotypes about incoming refugees. Use Quick Quiz and FAQ about Hmong Refugees (see attachments) in school newsletters and distribute to media outlets.

Resource:

Welcoming Refugees at School – special issue in e-newsletter Teaching Tolerance,
<http://www.tolerance.org/teach/current/event.jsp?cid=472>



5. Check Student Health

Inform school nurse and public health officials of the new family's arrival. Do a careful check of student's immunization records, hearing, and dental needs.

Resource:

Web Link of Health Issues for Hmong Refugees (22 pages):
http://www.brycs.org/documents/ft_BRYCS0846.pdf



6. Do English Language Learner (ELL) Placement

Inform ELL / ESL staff of student's arrival and do ELL testing and placement.

Resource:

See DPI English Language Learner (ELL) Web site to examples of approved language proficiency tests, best practices, etc: <http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/ell/index.html>



7. Make Parent Contact

Contact parents and their local family sponsors, following ELL staff guides for involving refugee parents. Parents need to know school expectations and resources available to them. Consider planning meetings with families, teachers, sponsors, and interpreters. Note that refugee parents may have multiple jobs and multiple shifts and working hours; they may need assistance in seeking release time from employers.

Resource:

Bicultural Parenting for South East Asian Families (University of Minnesota)
<http://www.extension.umn.edu/distribution/familydevelopment/DE7245.html>



8. Prevent Bullying

Contact school staff and counselors to be alert to problems that sometimes arise when a vulnerable new student enters the school community.

Resource:

DPI's Safe Schools Web page includes several resources specific to addressing student concerns about bullying and victimization.

Web site: <http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/dlsea/sspw/safeschool.html>

Additional resources on the attached page relating to Gangs and Bullying Prevention.



9. Develop Curriculum

Find ways to share the cultures and experiences all refugee and immigrant children as part of the classroom curriculum. Use the arrival of new students to strengthen the school's commitment to multicultural training, resources, and curriculum.

Resources:

1. *Teacher Resources:* <http://library.uwsuper.edu/hmong/pedagogical.html>
2. *Hmong Culture Kit:* <http://culturekits.homestead.com/files/index.html>
3. *Hmong Bookstore in Minneapolis:* <http://hmongabc.com/>
4. *Translation of Curriculum of Children in Thailand's Public School nearest Wat Tham Krabok.*
Available on DPI's Web site: <http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/ell/index.html>



10. Provide Professional Development / Hire Diverse Staff

Help teachers develop skills to serve students from diverse cultures. Connect teachers and staff to opportunities for second- and heritage-language learning. Help staff learn how to work with parents and communities and serve children with special needs. In hiring and training new staff, seek professionals with life and cultural experience that reflects that of the changing student population.



Milwaukee teacher Michelle Trevino is greeted by student performing Thai classical dance at Mathayom Wat Nairong Public Secondary School in Bangkok. 2004 Photo by M. Uraneck

Summary: School Checklist New Hmong Refugees 2004

- ☐ **1. Anticipate Numbers**
- ☐ **2. Collaborate with Other Agencies**
- ☐ **3. Value Experience**
- ☐ **4. Welcome Visibly and Involve the Media**
- ☐ **5. Check Student Health**
- ☐ **6. Do English Language Learner (ELL) Placement**
- ☐ **7. Make Parent Contact**
- ☐ **8. Prevent Bullying**
- ☐ **9. Develop Curriculum**
- ☐ **10. Provide Professional Development and Hire Diverse Staff**

Workshops regarding New Hmong Students

Contact DPI to request regional area workshops

Meeting Needs of New Hmong Students

A three-hour workshop for bilingual aides, principals and administrators, counselors, and ELL and regular classroom teachers who want to better understand the backgrounds, needs, and resources available for incoming Hmong refugee students. Presenters: DPI Bilingual / ELL staff Dr. Seree Weroha and Ms. Noy Aphayrath, plus Wisconsin educators who participated in DPI's 2004 Fulbright Hays Seminar to Thailand and Laos and local area refugee providers

Contact:

Brenda Noy Aphayrath,

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

PO Box 7841, Madison WI 53707-7841

Brenda.aphayrath@dpi.state.wi.us;

(608) 267-2443, tel.; (608) 266-1965, fax

Wausau, Wisconsin

September 27, 2004

Hmong Life and Education at Wat Tham Krabok and Integration of Hmong Culture in the Curriculum

East High School Auditorium, 2701 N. 18th Street

3:30 – 5:00. Inservice for Wausau teachers

Madison, Wisconsin

November 1, 2004

Hmong Life and Education in Wat Tham Krabok

Workshop for ELL teachers, adult ESL methods instructions, Hmong-English bilingual teachers and teacher aids

Pyle Center, University of Wisconsin-Madison

8:30 am – 4:15 pm

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Workshop for ELL / ELL staff will be scheduled in January or February 2005

See also list of scheduled presentations of educators in DPI's Fulbright Hays Seminar to Thailand & Laos included in this booklet.

Wisconsin **** ESTIMATED HMONG ARRIVALS **** As of 7/14/2004

County	Hmong Population	Anticipated Individuals Enroute	Anticipated Families Enroute
Adams	0	37	8
Brown	3,893	221	46
Calumet	63	64	9
Chippewa	356	27	5
Dane	4,900	243	52
Dunn	1,287	67	13
Eau Claire	2,959	101	23
Fond du Lac	406	46	10
Jefferson	89	4	1
Juneau	7	6	2
La Crosse	3,491	244	50
Manitowoc	1,889	129	26
Marathon	4,712	427	90
Milwaukee	9,835	764	157
Outagamie	4,260	169	41
Portage	950	136	30
Sheboygan	4,233	297	70
St. Croix	7	6	1
Winnebago	2,072	135	33
Wood	787	67	15
TOTAL	46,196	3,190	682

Numbers are from U.S. Dept. of State data collected in Thailand based on refugees' indicated destinations. They are comparable in number to letters of interest filed by US residents who indicated that they were sponsoring or prepared to welcome relatives or family members from Thailand.

With appreciation to:
 Ying Lee, Bureau of Migrant, Refugee and Labor Services
 Wisconsin State Department of Workforce Development
 Madison, Wisconsin, USA
 (608) 267-7276
ying.lee@dwd.state.wi.us

WISCONSIN REFUGEE SERVICE PROVIDERS¹

City & Agency	Address	Contact Persons	Programs
APPLETON Hmong American Partnership- Fox Valley	2198 S. Memorial Dr. Appleton, WI 54915 920-739-7244 Fax: 920-739-3687	Lo Lee, Executive Director	Refugee Employment Services
APPLETON Lutheran Social Service	820 College Ave Appleton, WI 54911 920-733-2860 Fax: 920-733-7321	Liv Arafat, Contract Manager	Older Refugee Services
FOND DU LAC ADVOCAP, Inc.	19 W. First St. P.O. Box 1108 Fond Du Lac, WI 54936 920-922-7760 Fax: 920-922-7214	Michael Bonertz, Executive Director Brian Jacobson, Refugee Program Manager	Refugee Employment, Family Strengthening & Mental Health Services
GREEN BAY Catholic Charities	Department of Resettlement & Immigration Services 1825 Riverside Drive P.O. Box 23825 Green Bay, WI 54305 920-437-7531 Fax: 920-437-0694	Karen Johnston, Director Barbara Biebel, Director So Thao, Resettlement Coordinator	Refugee Family Strengthening & Mental Health Services
GREEN BAY Hmong Association of Green Bay	200 S. Ashland Ave. Green Bay, WI 54303 920-437-4550 Fax: 920-437-4916	Ker Vang, Executive Director	(Please contact the agency for program info)
GREEN BAY Southeast Asian American Community Center	401 9 th St. Green Bay, WI 54303 920-432-8900	Yia Thao, President	(Please contact the agency for program info)
LA CROSSE La Crosse Area Hmong Mutual Assistance Association	2615 George St. La Crosse, WI 54603 608-781-5744 Fax: 608-781-5011	Denis Tucker & Thai Vue Executive Associate Directors	Refugee Employment, Marriage Enhancement, Family Strengthening, & Older Refugee Services
MADISON Freedom, Inc.	601 Bayview Madison, WI 53715 608-256-7808	Kabzuag Vaj, Director	Refugee Family Strengthening
MADISON Jewish Social Services	6434 Enterprise LN Madison, WI 53719 608-278-1808 Fax: 608-278-7814	Steven Morrison, Executive Director Barbara Spierer, Director of Resettlement	Older Refugee Program
MANITOWOC Hmong Community Center, Inc.	1517 Washington St. Manitowoc, WI 54220 920-684-1228 Fax: 920-684-0461	Viluck Kue, Executive Director	Refugee Employment, Youth & Mental Health Services

¹ Updated: 05/2004. With appreciation to: Ying Lee, Bureau of Migrant, Refugee & Labor Services, Wisconsin State Department of Workforce Development, Madison, Wisconsin, USA, 608-267-7276, E-mail: ying.lee@dwd.state.wi.us

City & Agency	Address	Contact Persons	Programs
MENOMONIE Hmong American Community Association	1421 N. Broadway, #116 Menomonie, WI 54751 715-232-9350 Fax: 715-232-9356	Youa Pao Vang, Executive Director	Refugee Employment & Family Strengthening
MENOMONIE Workforce Resources, Inc.	401 Technology Drive Menomonie, WI 54751 715-232-7380 Fax: 715-232-2240	Richard Best, Contract Manager	Refugee Employment Services
MILWAUKEE Catholic Charities	2057 S 14 th Street Milwaukee WI 53204 414/643-8570 Fax: 414/643-6726	Rosine Schmitt, Resettlement Director	Preventive Health, Refugee Employment Services
MILWAUKEE Hmong American Friendship Association	3824 W. Vliet St. Milwaukee, WI 53208 414-344-6575 Fax: 414-344-6581	Lo Neng Kiatoukaysy, Executive Director	Refugee Family Strengthening Program Older Refugee Program
MILWAUKEE Hmong American Women's Association	2414 W. Vliet St. Milwaukee, WI 53208 414-342-0858 Fax: 414-342-0860	Chris Xiong, Project Coordinator	(Please contact the agency for program info)
MILWAUKEE Hmong Educational Advancements, Inc.	2414 W. Vliet St. Milwaukee, WI 53205 414-931-8834	Lee Yang, Executive Director	(Please contact the agency for program info)
MILWAUKEE International Institute of Wisconsin	1110 N. Old World Third St. Ste.420 Milwaukee, WI 53203 414-225-6220 Fax 414-225-6235	Alexander P. Durtka, President	Preventive Health, Refugee Employment Services
MILWAUKEE Jewish Family Services	1300 N. Jackson St Milwaukee, WI 53202 414-225-1350 Fax: 414-289-0185	Elliot Lubar, Executive Director Barbara Weber, MARC Coordinator	Refugee Employment, Preventive Health, & Older Refugee Services
MILWAUKEE Lao Family Community, Inc.	2331 W. Vieau Pl. Milwaukee, WI 53204 414-383-4180 Fax: 414-385-3386	Shoua N. Xiong, Executive Director	Employment Services
MILWAUKEE Lutheran Social Services	647 W. Virginia St. Suite 300 Milwaukee WI 414-325-3096 Fax: 414-325-3208	Susan Gundlach, Resettlement Director	Preventive Health, Employment, Older Refugee Program
MILWAUKEE Medical College of Wisconsin	8701 Watertown Plank Rd Milwaukee, WI 53226 414-456-8507 Fax: 414-456-6555	Sheryl Cowling, Project Coordinator	Refugee Mental Health Services
MILWAUKEE Milwaukee Christian Center	2137 W Greenfield Ave Milwaukee, WI 53204 414-645-5350 Fax: 414-645-1859	Kathy Baillargeon, Contract Manager	Older Refugee Services

City & Agency	Address	Contact Persons	Programs
MILWAUKEE Shee Yee Community, Inc.	1717 W. Mitchell St. Milwaukee, WI 53204 414-383-3536	Chue Tria Thao, Executive Director	(Please contact the agency for program info)
OCONTO NEWCAP, Inc.	1201 Main Street Oconto, WI 54153 920-834-4621	Jaime Johnson, Project Manager	Refugee Employment Services
OSHKOSH ADVOCAP, Inc.	2929 Harrison St. Oshkosh, WI 54901 920-426-0150 Fax: 920-426-3071)		Refugee Employment, Family Strengthening & Mental Health Services
OSHKOSH Lake Winnebago Area Mutual Assistance Association	316 Court St. Oshkosh, WI 54901 920-235-5133 Fax: 920-235-5168	Jack Y. Chang, Executive Director	(Please contact the agency for program info)
SHEBOYGAN Hmong Mutual Assistance Association of Sheboygan	2304 Superior Ave. Sheboygan, WI 53081 920-458-0808 Fax: 920-458-0081	ChaSong Yang, Executive Director	Refugee Employment, Youth, Mental Health & Older Refugee Services
STEVENS POINT CAP Services, Inc.	5499 HWY 10 East Stevens Point, WI 54481 715-343-7512 Fax: 715-343-7175	Karl Pnazeck, CEO Mary Patoka, Director of Community Se	Refugee Family Strengthening Program
STEVENS POINT Hmong Association of Portage County	101 N. Division St., Suite E Stevens Point, WI 54481 715-341-3703 Fax: 715-344-5441	Bla Xue Vang, President	(Please contact the agency for program info)
WEST ALLIS MAXIMUS W-2 Agency	1304 S. 70 th St. West Allis, WI 53214 414-607-7371 Fax: 414-607-0466	Ricardo Ybarra, Financial Employment Pla	Employment Services
WAUSAU Children's Services Society of Wisconsin	705 S. 24 th Ave., Suite 402 Wausau, WI 54401 715-848-1457 Fax: 715-848-2959	Andrew Benedetto, Director	Refugee Mental Health Services
WAUSAU Wausau School District	415 Seymour St. P.O. Box 359 Wausau, WI 54402-0359 715-842-0341	Nell Anderson, Bilingual/Multicultural Dire	Youth Services & SE Asian Child Tutoring Program
WAUSAU Wausau Area Hmong Mutual Association	1109 N. 6 th St. Wausau, WI 54403 715-842-8390 Fax: 715-842-9202	Peter Yang, Chief Operating Officer	Refugee Employment, Family Strengthening & Youth, Mental Health & Older Refugee Services
WISCONSIN RAPIDS Hmong Association of Wood County	1430 2 nd Street North Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54494 715-424-4981 Fax: 715-424-4964	Yong Chue Khang, President	(Please contact the agency for program info)

Health Information about the New Refugees

Background on Potential Health Issues for Hmong Refugees from Wat Tham Krabok, Thailand by the Office of Global Health Affairs

An excellent document has been prepared for state refugee health coordinators, local resettlement organizations, and health care providers. The document details types of health concerns that may potentially affect the incoming Hmong refugees from the Wat Tham Krabok in Thailand. Access it at:

Web Link of Health Issues for Hmong Refugees (2 pages):

http://www.brycs.org/documents/ft_BRYCS0846.pdf

Dr. David Smith, Wisconsin Department of Health and Human Services, told the August 2004 meeting of the Governor's Task Force on Hmong Resettlement that public health officials should check for:

Dental Health - Children have had little or no dental care. Consider making an effort to seek pro-bono services from local dentists to treat initial cases.

Hearing Loss - Because of childhood ear infections, there is greater than average hearing loss. Testing will be especially important for students who appear to have difficulty learning English as a second language.

Asthma – The location of the refugee center near a mining pit, and large amounts of resultant dust in the air, may account for the asthma of many children.

Immunizations – Expect children to be fully immunized, as this issue was addressed by Thai and UN officials before refugees left Thailand.

Tuberculosis – Note that the relatively recent date of immunizations may give “false positives” for TB. Any active TB cases in the settlement were treated in Thailand and the departure of these individuals was delayed until treatments were completed.

Scabies – Most cases of scabies were treated before the children left Thailand.

Diabetes - This will be more prevalent in adults than school-age children.

Hypertension – This appears primarily in the non-school age population.

Mental health issues – This is more common among adults and elderly persons than children.

Prevention Resources: Gangs and Bullying

It's natural that new students want and need to make friends, and will have anxiety about being accepted. Teachers should make special efforts to see that new immigrant and refugee students are not being bullied, including by members of their own ethnic or cultural group. The phenomenon of "last to arrive" can certainly be operative for new students, especially those unfamiliar with many Wisconsin and American objects and customs. Counselors and teachers should identify this as a potential risk issue to parents, as well.

The following resources, free materials, and student curriculum workshops are recommended to teachers, guidance counselors, and school staff

Resources

DPI's Safe Schools Web page

DPI's Safe Schools Web page includes resources specific to addressing students concerns about bullying and victimization.

Web site: <http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/dlsea/sspw/safeschool.html>

Wisconsin Clearinghouse for Prevention Resources

This includes a listing of free resources that Wisconsin residents may order on a variety of prevention topics. Scroll down to "Subjects," then scroll to "Violence, Gangs, Abuse and Child Abuse" for resources specific to gangs and bullying.

Web site: <http://wch.uhs.wisc.edu/03-Resources/03-Free.html>

The Bullying Project

This is a student-project through iEARN, the internet collaborative. A broad age-range of children around the world collaboratively attempts to address the issues of bullying, teasing and school violence. The Bullying Project, "Where you are NOT alone!" the site reads.

Web site: www.bullying.org



"No one can make you feel inferior without your consent."

~ Eleanor Roosevelt

Graphic from The Bullying Project: www.bullying.org

Governor's Hmong Resettlement Task Force

Charge to the Task Force *June 30, 2004*

The Special Advisory Hmong Resettlement Task Force will advise the Governor and the Secretary of the Department of Workforce Development on matters relating to the resettlement of Hmong refugees from Thailand. The Task Force will make recommendations on system improvements, best practices, employment connections, housing, citizenship, and access to needed services, in order to successfully integrate this new refugee population. The Task Force will serve as a clearinghouse for community resettlement efforts, and will advise state agencies on communication strategies and collaboration opportunities.

Hmong Task Force Members

The chair of the Task Force is Kaying Xiong, first Hmong principal in the United States. Ms. Xiong is principal of Locust Lane Elementary School in Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

Besides Ms. Xiong, the other task force members are:

- Nell Anderson, Director of Bilingual/Multicultural/Equity, Wausau
- Andrew Benedetto, Administrator, Children's Service Society, Wausau
- Phyllis Bermingham, Wausau Area HMAA Board, Wausau
- Melissa Borth, Community Nurse, Refugee Advisory Committee, Appleton
- Susan Gundlach, Resettlement Director, Lutheran Social Services of Wisconsin, Milwaukee
- Sharon Hunter, Education Specialist, Department of Public Instruction, Wausau
- Dan Idzikowski, Resettlement Director, Catholic Charities of La Crosse, Eau Claire
- Mary Anne Jackson, Education Director, Wisconsin Technical College System, Madison
- Yang Max Kue, Police Officer, Manitowoc
- Thajying Lee, Director, United Refugee Services of Wisconsin, Madison
- Chia Y Ly, Wells Fargo Bank, Green Bay
- Cheryl McIlquham, Department of Health and Family Services, Madison
- John Medinger, Mayor, City of LaCrosse
- Blong Moua, Marathon County Job Specialist, Weston
- Yee Moua, WHEDA, Madison
- Jim Schramm, Mayor, Sheboygan
- Joe Vang, Fox Valley Job Service, Menasha
- Ker Vang, Director, Hmong Association of Green Bay, Green Bay
- Shwaw Vang, Member, Madison School Board, Madison
- Thai Vue, Associate Director, La Crosse Area Hmong Mutual Assistance Association, LaCrosse
- Ann Wondergem, Director, Sheboygan County Health and Human Services, Sheboygan
- Bee Xiong, Police Officer, Green Bay
- Kaying Xiong, Principal, Locust Lane Elementary School, Eau Claire
- Shoua Xiong, Lao Family Community in Milwaukee, Milwaukee
- Chris Xiong, Hmong American Women's Association Inc., Milwaukee
- Cha Song Yang, Director, Hmong MAA of Sheboygan, Inc., Sheboygan
- Peter Yang, CEO, Wausau Area Hmong Mutual Assistance Association, Inc., Wausau



State of Wisconsin
Department of Public Instruction
Elizabeth Burmaster, State Superintendent

****NEWS RELEASE****

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DPI 2004-73 B

Monday, May 10, 2004
Re-issued Monday, May 24, 2004
CONTACT: Joseph Donovan, Communications Officer
(608) 266-3559 / joseph.donovan@dpi.state.wi.us

DPI selected for Thai/Laos teacher grant

Wisconsin educators to visit homelands of many immigrant students

MADISON—Senator Herbert S. Kohl and State Superintendent Elizabeth Burmaster recently announced the selection of the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) to lead a Fulbright Study Seminar to Laos and Thailand this summer. Currently, Wisconsin schools enroll more than 12,000 students of Southeast Asian heritage, including young people with Thai, Hmong, Lao, Mien, Cambodian, and Vietnamese backgrounds.

The seminar, “Highlighting Southeast Asia Heritage and Culture in the Curriculum,” will give 17 Wisconsin educators an opportunity to visit two of the countries that were homes to many of these new immigrants. “We are honored to receive this grant,” said Burmaster. “It is so important for Wisconsin teachers to understand the rich cultures our children come from and the remarkable challenges that their families have faced before coming to Wisconsin. We want all Wisconsin students to understand how important this part of the world is from an environmental, economic, and humanitarian perspective.”

Leading the delegation will be DPI Deputy State Superintendent Tony Evers, assisted by DPI’s Bilingual / English Language Learners (ELL) Consultant Seree Weroha. With life experience in Southeast Asia, Weroha is proficient in the Thai, Lao, Hmong, and Lue languages.

The study seminar is scheduled for June 18-July 23 and will include a visit to the Wat Tham Krabok resettlement camp near Saraburi in Thailand. Because of the closing of this resettlement camp, more than 1,500 new Hmong students are scheduled to arrive in Wisconsin starting July 1. The seminar also will visit Bangkok schools and teacher training centers, schools in the northern hill tribe areas around Chiang Mai, as well as in I-San, the northeastern part of Thailand. Educators also will travel to Laos to visit education sites in Vientiane and Luang Prabang, the old royal capital of Laos, now listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 7841, Madison, WI 53707-7841 • **Street Address:** 125 South Webster Street, Madison, WI 53702
Telephone: (608) 266-3390 • **Toll Free:** (800) 441-4563 • **FAX:** (608) 267-1052 • **TDD:** (608) 267-2427

Funding for the seminar is part of the U.S. Department of Education's Fulbright Hays Group Seminars Abroad Program, which strives to help educators increase their knowledge about culture, politics, and economics in important parts of the world, particularly in areas less accessible to tourists. The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and University of Wisconsin-Madison's Center for Southeast Asia also are lending their expertise.

Photographs of seminar participants may be viewed and downloaded at <http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/sprntdnt/phthailand.html> .

Educators selected for the international seminar include:

- Khampheua Ayala, literacy coach, Wisconsin Avenue Elementary School, Milwaukee;
- Sombath Bounket, counselor and mathematics teacher, Washington High School, Milwaukee;
- Sydney Chang, district interpreter, Sheboygan Area School District;
- Brian Driscoll, fourth- and fifth-grade bilingual team teacher, Sandburg Elementary School, Madison;
- Gail Essex of Oak Creek, reading and language arts teacher, South Milwaukee Middle School;
- Elizabeth Folberg of Wausau, English language learner and French teacher, D.C. Everest Middle School, Weston;
- Laty Keodouangsy, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, UW-Milwaukee;
- Pao Lor of Appleton, assistant principal and language arts teacher, Neenah High School;
- Joseph Nigh, bilingual education teacher, East High School, Madison;
- Kalyani Rai, assistant professor, UW-Milwaukee School of Continuing Education;
- Maira Rivera, bilingual mathematics and science teacher, Cherokee Middle School, Madison;
- Amy Silha of Greenville, language, science, and social studies teacher, Jefferson Elementary School, Appleton;
- Gwaub Thao, middle school bilingual teacher, Milwaukee Education Center, Milwaukee;
- Mang Thao, geography and language arts teacher, Horace Mann Middle School, Wausau;
- Michelle Trevino, literacy coach, South Division High School, Milwaukee;
- Bee Lor Vang, fourth- and fifth-grade teacher, Jefferson Elementary School, Oshkosh; and
- Chia Vang, bilingual teacher, Johnson Elementary School, Appleton.

###

Presentations by 2004 Fulbright Seminar Participants to Thailand and Laos

Contact Fulbright participants directly, or contact Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction's Madeline Ura-neck (608) 267-2278 or Seree Wero-ha (608) 266-7292 for information about availability of presenters who are prepared to speak on such topics as:

Refugee Education and Hmong Refugees from Thailand

- A Child's Life in Wat Tham Krabok
- Welcoming Refugee Students to School Communities
- Differences between the Earlier Hmong Immigrants and the New Wave
- Educating Hmong-Speaking Parents about US School Expectations
- Health Issues of New Refugees
- Refugee Culture: Home / School Connections
- Education Opportunities for the Hill Tribes Students
- Cultural Comparisons: Interface between Immigrants and Policy Makers
- Implications of New Hmong Immigration for Technical Colleges in Wisconsin

Curriculum about Asia for US K-16 Students

- Bringing the Cultural Diversity of Laos and Thailand into the Classroom
- Real Stories of Hmong Refugees for K-12 Students
- A Middle School Curriculum: The Hmong Experience
- Artifact Trunk: Objects Signifying Hmong / Lao / Thai Culture
- A Second Look at the Mekong River (Personal Story)
- Oral Narratives of Refugee Migration & Cultural Adaptation for Adult Students
- Major Religions of Southeast Asian Peoples
- Hmong Dialects: Regional Differences of Blue and White Hmong

Education in Thailand and Laos

- Motivational Factors of Thai Students
- Thailand's Education System
- An Administrator's View of Thai Schools
- Comparative Education: Thai / Lao Education Systems
- Cultural Context of Educational Reform in Thailand
- Action Research Collaboration between Thai & US Educator
- Transformative Experience of the Fulbright Hays Seminar

***Look for presentations about New Hmong Refugees
and Education in Laos and Thailand at these conferences and workshops:***

- **State Superintendent's Fall Conference**, September 22-23, 2004, Madison, Wisconsin
- **Global Educators Conference**, "Travel the World in a Weekend," October 8-9, 2004, Eau Claire, Wisconsin
- **Wisconsin Education Association Council (WEAC) Conference**, October 28-29, 2004, Madison
- **Wisconsin Association of Foreign Language Teachers (WAFLT)**, November 5-6, 2004, Appleton
- **84th Annual State Education Convention**, (WASB WASDA, BASB), January 19-21, 2005, Milwaukee
- **Education across Six Continents**, March 11-12, 2005, Madison
- **Wisconsin Council for the Social Studies (WCSS)**, March 21-22, 2005, Middleton
- **DPI New Wisconsin Promise Conference**, January 11-12, 2005, Madison
- **National Association of Bilingual Education**, January 19-22, 2005, San Antonio, Texas
- **Wisconsin State Reading Association Convention**, February 3-5, 2005, Milwaukee
- **Wisconsin Association of Middle Level Educators (WAMLE)**, April 21-22, 2005, Stevens Point
- **First International Conference of Laos Studies**, May 20-22, 2005, DeKalb, Illinois
- **National Association for the Education & Advancement of Cambodian Laotian, and Vietnamese-Americans (NAFEA)**, May 2005
- **Wisconsin Technical College System International Education Institute**, May 2005
- **Wisconsin Geographic Alliance (WIGA) Summer Institute**, June 16-28, 2005, Eau Claire
- **Association of Wisconsin School Administrators (AWSA)**, October 26-28, 2005, Wisconsin Dells



Map courtesy of Thailand Ministry of Education, Jul 2004 presentation



Photo: St. Paul – Ramsey County Public Health.

Frequently Asked Questions about the Hmong Refugees

Who are the Hmong refugees coming to Wisconsin?

Hmong refugees in Thailand are part of a large displacement of peoples resulting from the Vietnam War. In the aftermath of the war, Hmong people were forced to leave their native homelands in Laos and flee to Thailand. Since 1985 families have moved or been moved from one location to another, and have survived and maintained cultural traditions against great odds. The present influx of Hmong families to the United States results from a large settlement near Bangkok being closed by the Thai Government. The United States has offered to take in some of the refugees, to honor past 1970's and 1980's military service of Hmong people on behalf of U.S. soldiers. Most of the 14,600 Hmong people coming to the United States have relatives already living in the United States. The four states which presently have the largest number of Hmong-Americans, California, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and North Carolina, in that order, will also receive the largest numbers of the current refugees.

What is happening to the refugees in Thailand?

The Hmong refugees had only a limited time to register for immigration to the United States. Refugees who registered are eligible for immigration if they pass an extensive number of medical tests, a drug test, receive immunizations, take a cultural course and complete necessary paper work. It is not yet known what will happen to refugees left behind, both those who choose not to immigrate or those not present when the original list of 14,600 names was created. People who are concerned about the refugees left behind should contact their federal representatives.

How many refugees are children?

About 50% of the refugees at Wat Tham Krabok are children under the age of 14. Most of these children were born at Wat Tham Krabok. Even older teens have little memory of their parents' or grandparents' original homeland in Laos or even of life in previous camps. Their entire existence has been at the Wat settlement.

When will the first refugees start arriving?

The first refugees began arriving in late June and small groups will continue arriving through December 2004. The U.S. State Department's goal was to resettle the refugees by the end of the federal fiscal year, which is September 30th, 2004. However, that probably will not happen due to the complex refugee determination process.

How many Hmong are actually in the camp?

No one knows the actual figures, but the best estimate is that there are about 15,000 people there. Of these, 14,600 are eligible to be processed for resettlement. Many family members were outside the camp, for example, working in jobs in other parts of the country, when the original announcements were made and lists drawn up. The difficulties caused by families being separated is of great concern to many people coming, and to those left behind.

Do the children in the camp have any schooling?

There is a small school inside the camp that is run by Hmong teachers, and a local Thai public school that provides education to the children. In addition, there is informal schooling in homes. On average, it is estimated that most children have about 2.5 years of formal schooling. They are nonetheless bright and eager learners. Compared to American children, many of them have had much responsibility for taking care of younger siblings or being part of family businesses, and many have skills in arts and handicrafts.

How is the group different from the first wave of Hmong immigration?

This group of refugees is different from the first group of Hmong refugees who immigrated to the United States in many ways. An entire generation or two have been born and raised in Thailand, without contact with their former homelands in Laos. With a series of displacements and their classification as illegal residents of Thailand, they received no provision of things like food, water, or medicine from Non-Governmental Organizations or the United Nations. This resulted in their having to become more self-sufficient than the first wave of Hmong immigrants were. Compared to the 1980's immigrants, persons in this group may also have had more contact with Western medical systems and have had more exposure to technologies and world events through television, computers, and movies.

Will refugees deplete already-stretched social services or compete for scarce jobs?

It is important to recall that by definition, a refugee is a person who cannot return to his country of origin because of war or political persecution. Like scores of other Americans who once came to this country as immigrants or refugees, the new Hmong refugees will soon become gainfully employed, add to the tax base of the communities in which they settle, participate in community life, and become United States citizens.

Original source: Ramsey County Report, Web site: www.co.ramsey.mn.us St. Paul, MN 5/04. Modified by Wisconsin DPI 8/04.



Children gather in a street in Wat Tham Krabok Hmong settlement in Thailand to look at posters displayed on a truck, advertising the once-a-month movie. Photo by M. Ura-neck, 2004.

Quiz²

Test Your Knowledge about the Hmong Refugees

Circle True or False below each question.

1. Refugees don't have to work to support themselves. a. True b. False
2. Wisconsin has the largest urban concentration of Hmong in the U.S. a. True b. False
3. Refugees will use up all of our government and health care services or resources. a. True b. False
4. Refugees are not well educated. a. True b. False
5. Refugees have no skills. a. True b. False
6. Refugees have really big families. a. True b. False
7. There are refugees at Wat Tham Krabok because of U.S. involvement in Laos during the Vietnam War. a. True b. False
8. Refugees are very sick and may bring Tuberculosis and other diseases into Wisconsin. a. True b. False
9. Refugee children are up-to-date on immunizations giving them a "healthy start" for school next fall. a. True b. False
10. Wisconsin is receiving 15,000 refugees. a. True b. False
11. Refugees don't pay taxes. a. True b. False
12. Refugees get free cars. a. True b. False
13. Refugees get more government benefits than other groups. a. True b. False

Answers on next pages

² Source: Ramsey County Report, www.co.ramsey.mn.us St. Paul, MN 5/2004, edited by Wisconsin DPI 8/2004

Test Your Knowledge about the Hmong Refugees

Answers

1. False – Work

Refugees do work, and they have to work to survive in America. Even if families initially qualify to receive three months of limited welfare assistance, they must work as a requirement for receiving these dollars from our government. Their major challenge will be trying to find work with limited English skills in their first few years, in order to survive and support their families.

2. False – Concentration

Wisconsin's current Hmong-American population numbers between 30,000 and 40,000, giving it a ranking of 3rd of 4 states with the largest Hmong-American population. Most Hmong-Americans have been in the United States since the late 1980's, have become citizens, learned English, obtained professional jobs, become home owners, and have children who are fluent in English and are doing well in school. They are a vibrant part of Wisconsin communities and have contributed in every sector.

3. False – Use of social services

Refugees will not use up all of our services or resources. As the newest Americans without citizen status, they will actually have fewer resources and benefits than U.S. citizens. Whatever investment we make in these refugees now, will be returned as they become productive, contributing citizens.

4. False – Education

Depending on the life experience of the refugee, he or she may or may not have had formal education. Even licensed, professionally trained teachers and dentists were forced to live in refugee camps in Thailand. However, it is true that because of their life condition as refugees, most adults and children have had far fewer opportunities for formal schooling than people who live in the United States.

5. False – Skills

Refugees have many skills, but most will not be transferable to the United States economy. For example, there are many refugees who have farming skills, but many of our agricultural techniques are different. Refugees may be spiritual leaders, artists, crafts persons, musicians, or leaders in their own communities.

6. False – Family Size

Hmong families appear larger because they do not define a “nuclear” family in the same way that some Caucasian-Americans do. A family may include grandparents, younger siblings of the head of the household, or others. The average family size was 6-8 people for the people of Wat Tham Krabok, which is larger than many U.S. households but not unusual in our country.

7. True – History of Vietnam

The reason the United States has sponsored so many Hmong refugees over the last 30 years is because of the significant contribution the Hmong people made during the Vietnam War and the involvement in Laos and Cambodia. They saved the lives of American soldiers while sacrificing many of their own lives and property.

8. False – Health

Refugees are all given a medical screening, including blood and urine tests before they are admitted to the United States. Any active disease must be treated prior to immigration to the U.S.

9. True – Immunizations

Any child who is entering school must be current on immunizations, or they will not be allowed to attend school. Children received immunizations before leaving Thailand, and school and public health officials will check them again, as a requirement of enrolling in Wisconsin schools.

10. False – 15,000 refugees

There are about 15,000 people at Wat Tham Krabok, but they will not all be coming here. The U.S. State Department estimates that about 3,000 people will come to Wisconsin. No one will have an accurate count until the refugees arrive.

11. False – Taxes

Refugees pay taxes just like anyone else.

12. False – Cars

Refugees do not get free cars. The misconception may have originated because often several families pool their money together to purchase one car that can be used by multiple families to get them to work, to school, and to do errands.

13. False – Benefits

Refugees do not get more government benefits than other groups. They do get a few benefits immediately upon resettlement, but these are minimal, far below what most Americans would think adequate to live. Refugees actually get fewer benefits than established citizens. For example, if you are a refugee and not a U.S. citizen, you can only receive Supplementary Security Income (SSI) for 7 years. Citizens do not have a limit.